

Galaxies

Evening Service – Sunday 4 December 2005

Advent – The return of the (gay) King?



So ... was it John, James, Lazarus or ????

All about Advent

The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and traditionally the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent (prophesied in the New Testament, to judge the living and the dead and bring about the final triumph of good over evil. The writings of the Apostles in the New Testament express the belief that the Second Coming will happen soon and suggest that it may happen within a generation of their own time.) Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history.

Most liberal Christians don't believe in a physical/spiritual second return, but that Jesus' resurrection was the realisation by his disciples that the message survived the death of the messenger, that the Kingdom had already come and is made manifest when we treat everyone as our "neighbour" and treat them with the sort of loving-kindness we would like to experience from others.

This year it will be positively queer - we will also be considering a third type of Advent -

The Return of the (gay) King. (apologies to J R R Tolken and Peter Jackson!)

But we won't be forgetting our past either, we will be lighting the Advent Wreath.

The Advent wreath is an increasingly popular symbol of the beginning of the Church year in many churches as well as homes. It is a circular evergreen wreath (real or artificial) with five candles, four around the wreath and one in the centre. Since the wreath is symbolic and a vehicle to tell the Christmas story, there are various ways to understand the symbolism. The exact meaning given to the various aspects of the wreath is not as important as the story to which it invites us to listen, and participate.

The **circle of the wreath** reminds us of God, eternal and endless love, which has no beginning or end. The **green of the wreath** speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life. **Candles** symbolise the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son. The **four outer candles** represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent, which themselves symbolise the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ.



The colours **of the candles** vary with different traditions, but there are usually three purple or blue candles, corresponding to the sanctuary colours of Advent, and one pink or rose candle. One of the purple candles is lighted the first Sunday of Advent, a Scripture is read, a short devotional or reading is given, and a prayer offered. On subsequent Sundays, previous candles are relighted with an additional one lighted. The pink candle is lighted on the third Sunday of Advent.

The **light of the candles** itself becomes an important symbol of the season. The light reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world that comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life, and hope. It also reminds us that we are called to be a light to the world as we reflect the light of God's grace to others (Isa 42:6). The progression in the lighting of the candles symbolises the various aspects of our waiting experience. As the candles are lighted over the four week period, it also symbolises the darkness of fear and hopelessness receding and the shadows of sin falling away as more and more light is shed into the world. The flame of each new candle reminds the worshippers that something is happening, and that more is yet to come. Finally, the light that has come into the world is plainly visible as the Christ candle is lighted at Christmas, and worshippers rejoice over the fact that the promise of long ago has been realised.

Gathering together & Welcome

Lighting the *Galaxies Candle*

(Volunteer from among us)

Leader: We are all part of the rhythm of life.
As we mark this day of the journey, may
peace be with us.

People: May we be makers of the peace.

Leader: Where there is confusion and discord.

People: We will use loving-kindness as a way
through.

Leader: Where there is coldness and indifference,

**People: We will use the fire of our love to warm the coldness, to light fires of love and
banish indifference.**

Leader: Where there is injustice and discrimination

People: We will challenge it, we will speak out, we will do all we can to change it

Leader: Where there is joy and hope,

People: We will celebrate and share it together.

Leader: Let us meet one another in love and forgiveness

**People: Before God and one another we release anything we hold against another.
We regret all the harm we may have done; we stand beside each other in peace.
We listen to each other's stories and share each other's journey,
that we may understand each other deeply, lovingly and become friends.**

Leader: Jesus says to us, 'Come and follow me'

Now we bind our hearts together and reaffirm our commitment
to think wisely, to act justly, and to live compassionately.
Amen.



Hymn

AA8 Brother, Sister let me serve you

Affirmation of Faith – All together

I give thanks for life and put my trust in all its possibilities for good ...For my good, for the good of those whose lives mine touches, for all people, and for the earth itself;

I celebrate the honest search for meaning, for purpose, for truth and wholeness shown by people of faith through the ages, and join them in the quest;

I recognise in Jesus a man of integrity, insight and vision who continually challenges my willingness to settle for too little, both in myself, and in the world around me;

I find in the Christ of faith a source of strength and wholeness, an inspiration to new beginnings, and a spur to be all I am capable of;

I affirm the communities of trust, love and endeavour of those who, from time immemorial, have shared in the search, and who, with me, have felt our imagination quickened, our creativity fired, the boundaries of our understanding and empathy extended;

In these ways, and in the dynamic of their inter-linking I experience that which I call God.

And in God I put my trust,

Now and into the future

Amen



(by Ian Harris)

Acknowledging our Tradition

The Advent Wreath

Ca

1st CANDLE- (purple) "CANDLE OF HOPE"

Voice I The people who walked in the darkness has seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

Voice II The first candle reminds us that the prophets of old believed in God during troubled and anxious times, and they looked forward to the coming of the Messiah who would bring justice and righteousness. Today we light this first Advent Candle to remind us that God's coming is the promise of justice and integrity in human affairs. We too are called to believe in the God of hope for these days in which we live.

People: **As we light this hope candle and watch it, may we each light a candle in our life to light the path of justice, integrity and loving kindness to each other and to all of creation**

2nd CANDLE- (purple) "CANDLE OF PEACE"

Voice I Peace! Is there any message we long so much to hear!

Voice II This second candle is calling us to peace. Every day we experience that brokenness in our world expressed in painful person relationships, in strife within our nation, in war and mistrust between nations. How much we need to experience the breaking down of all that separates us. Peace is what we feel when we have honestly shared what we have with those who need it. Sometimes we share our time, or our love, or our energy.

People: As we light this peace candle and watch the brightness increase, may we each strive to live in unity with ourselves, our brothers and sisters and be peacemakers to all we meet by sharing what we have.

3rd CANDLE- (pink) "CANDLE OF JOY"

Voice I This third candle reminds us of Mary, who simply and Gladly responded to the call of God. She accepted God's call for her and became the mother of Jesus.

Voice II This candle calls to us to joyfully accept our calling, our humanity and our world. To cherish everything that exists because all of nature is interwoven and interdependent.

People: As we light this joy candle we renew our hope that Christ will be born again in our lives and speak to the world through our humanity. Our acts of loving-kindness are presents of joy for both the giver and receiver. We will delight in our home, planet earth, and treat her with respect and care.

4th CANDLE- (purple) "CANDLE OF LOVE"

Voice I This fourth candle is the candle we name love.

Voice II Love is not a noun. It is a verb. It is not something, rather it is someone in action. We love when we reach out to touch someone, or stay 10 minutes longer without looking at our watch. Almost everyone of us wants to be loved by all the rest of us. But no one can. The best we can hope for is to be loved by some people, some of the time. Perhaps our greatest achievement is to love other persons who are difficult or contrary, and refuse to love us back. Or to love a worthy cause or a valuable organisation which might die or get sick if we don't care for it.

People: As we light this candle of love, we recognise that to love is to get out of our world and into someone else's world. Jesus showed the unselfish, impartial path to love, crossing all the taboos of his time and culture – our path may not end in physical crucifixion but it just feels like that sometimes. No one ever said it was easy, but we call on the Christ Spirit to give us imagination and courage to carry the joyful light of love into the dark corners of our community, our country, our world.

Hymn

AA59 He came singing love

Readings

Norman Knipe

John 11 :17- 36

John 13: 23

John 19 : 26-28

John 20: 2

John 21: 7

John 21: 20

Contemporary Reflection

The return of the (Gay) King?

Pete Cowley, John grant, Sue Rostron, Judith Dale,
Tim Morgan, Jim Waters, Tony Pears

Prayers for the people

Leader: God of loving-kindness, peace-on-earth and justice-for-all, we pray, that we will help strengthen the hands of all who strive for peace and justice throughout the world, and, seeing that all human beings are our relatives, we will share the pain of those who are oppressed, and will strive to promote the dignity and freedom of every person.

People: **Jesus, when you walked the earth you were marginalised, oppressed, hated and misunderstood. You knew fear and suffering, injustice and pain ... and yet you call us to love those who hurt us and pray for those who persecute us so that we may be children of God.**

Teach me unconditional love; like the sun that shines on every one of us, like the rain that falls without discrimination.

Leader: God of love, in the dignity and worth you give to all your creatures, may we always acknowledge the respect the diversity and richness of your creation; that we may honour the persons who come to us; that we may refuse to use or to be used as objects of selfish gratification; and that we may work for equity and justice for all people.

People: **Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. (International Prayer for peace)**
Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace.
Let Peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe

Leader: God of the universe, the earth and nature, we stand in awe at the power of nature and think of all those affected by disasters – tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanoes. The raw power of nature is just a glimpse of your power in the universe. We pray for the dead and the living, that people all over the world will come together and help out with their gifts of love, help and money to help the survivors rebuild their lives.

Call of Faith to Action

Leader: As we search for some sense in life.

People: *may we find that meaning in our relationships of care, compassion and tenderness.*

Leader: We talk about loving-kindness as God

People: *Let us act with loving-kindness to all people, to all animals, to all of nature on earth*

Leader: We talk about peace-on-earth

People: *Let us not only talk peace, but act peacefully in all we do, and to be peace makers.
Let us listen to understand the other peoples point of view.*

Leader: Jesus the Sage challenged the authorities of his time and was tortured and then murdered for his audacity to point out bigotry, prejudice and injustice. In 2000 years the challenge remains just as strong as ever, the dangers just as great - for we are, all of us, either a part of the problem or a part of the solution.

The world needs people who live and breath loving-kindness, peace and justice.

Are we that people?

People: **Yes, we are that people.**

Hymn

AA85 Let justice roll down

Passing the Peace

Leader: Let us share our peace and love

Let us feel the power of the earth that holds us together.

Let us celebrate our gifts in song and dance.

Let us all rejoice in our power and our beauty.

People: **We open our hearts to the miracle of birth and the mystery of God's love in all creation.**

We carry in us the divine light that shone so brightly the night of Christ's birth.

The gift of love, which we share tonight, deepens us as people, deepens us as sisters and brothers.

People share the peace with those around them.

(Offering plate passed around during the hymn)



Offering and prayer of dedication

We recognise and bless the gifts brought to the table and those given to support the mission of Galaxies.



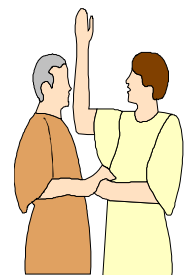
The Lord's Prayer – Jim Cotter

**People: Eternal Spirit Earth-maker, Pain-Bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be.
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and for ever.
Amen.**

The blessing

Let us stop for a moment and calm our thoughts as we prepare ourselves for radical action, just like Jesus:

- to act with peaceful, careful listening; even in the face of aggression
- to calmly and lovingly challenge duplicity, bigotry, prejudice and injustice wherever we encounter it.
- to accept people with loving-kindness in all our interactions.
- to share our joy and blessings freely with others.



Departure Hymn

AA89 Light of Lights

A very big **Thank You** to **Strumpet** for playing for us tonight

Tea, Coffee and Conversation